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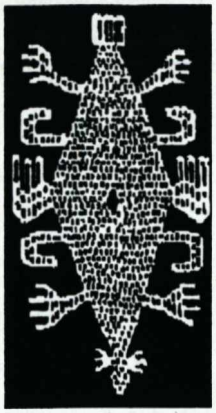

East Timor Action Network/U.S.
Media and Outreach Office
PO Box 150753, Brooklyn, NY 11215
(718)596-7668; etan-outreach@igc.apc.org

Media Release

For Immediate Release

Contact:
John M. Miller, (718)596-7668
Lynn Fredriksson, 202-544-6911

Senate, House Members Urge Intensified U.S. Pressure on Indonesia
East Timor Action Network Supports Congressional Resolutions

The East Timor Action Network (ETAN) today applauded Congressional efforts to insure a fair ballot on East Timor's political status. ETAN said it hoped that combined congressional and administration pressure will persuade Indonesia to live up to its international promises and end its campaign of violence and terror against pro-independence East Timorese.

At a press conference on Wednesday, members of the House and Senate announced the introduction of new resolutions on East Timor.

Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) announced the introduction in the House of Representatives of a resolution urging a ban on U.S. military assistance and arms transfers to Indonesia unless Jakarta stops supporting the paramilitary groups and ceases its own attacks on civilians. The ban would remain in effect until Indonesia has assisted in the successful disbanding its paramilitaries and has substantially reduced its own troop presence in East Timor.

At the same press conference Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Jack Reed (D-RI), Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Mitch McConnell (R-KY) announced their own resolution calling on the Clinton administration to intensify its efforts to persuade the Indonesian Government and military to disarm and disband the militias and grant full access to East Timor by international human rights and humanitarian organizations and the press. The resolution also urges the U.S. government to help fund the UN ballot process.

The House resolution, co-sponsored by Reps. Tom Lantos (D-CA), Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), also calls for an international investigation of the massacre at Liquica, and for the individuals responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice.

Francisco da Costa, an eyewitness to a recent massacre, described how a paramilitary militia group backed by the Indonesian army hacked to death at least 57 people who sought refuge at the home of priest the East Timor village of Liquica. Mr. da Costa urged the U.N. and the U.S. government "to pressure the Indonesian government and military to remove the weapons they have supplied the militia who have committed terror, intimidation and killing of unarmed civilians."

Senator Leahy said that "This resolution sounds an alarm. The situation is extremely fragile. The militias are sowing chaos and terror. Far stronger steps are needed by the Indonesian government and military to reign in the paramilitary groups."

Rep. Kennedy, "It has been documented that the Indonesian government has not only been standing by watching the recent massacres, but also facilitating and arming them.... The threat by the United States to cut off military assistance and arms transfers should serve to get the attention of the Indonesian government."

Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives announced their measures on the same day as the U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal signed a historic agreement to allow a UN-sponsored ballot in the territory Indonesia brutally invaded in 1975.

Senator Feingold said that "The agreement ... announced in New York will be rendered meaningless if people fear for their lives if they vote their real choice.... After years of selling arms to Indonesia..., the United States has a moral obligation to effect change in East Timor."

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